

SMELL

Blo bzang ལྷོ་བཟང་།

Don 'grub rgyal is thirty-three. He lies in bed. Vomit is sprinkled over the pink pillow cover and carpet. The stench fills every corner of the rooms. Tears mix with saliva and leak from his pale face. "I can feel you," he murmurs.

He slowly wipes his mouth, rolls on his back, and stares at the ceiling, where a moth ceaselessly flogs a light bulb.

"When did I start to hate?" he wonders.

He can't answer this question.

He loved his barren wife with all his heart. Every morning she had prepared fresh bread and tasty tea, and cooked different dishes for lunch and dinner. Now he lives alone in his store. He has instant noodles for supper, snacks for lunch, and avoids breakfast. He is unwilling to go home.

Bde skyid sgröl ma couldn't accept that smell in their home. They quarreled and fought, and she cursed her husband's ancestors. She finally left and returned to her parent's home.

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His mother was drunk in her bed as usual. He felt like puking when he neared her. He collected the bottles around Mtsho mo and cried out, "Why do you do this?"

"Oh, come here, dear son!"

He looked at her trembling hands and left.

Mtsho mo was fifty-eight. She and her husband had sold their livestock to run a shop in the Township Town and had sent their son to school. Later, her husband passed away, but nobody talked about how and why. After that, her illness grew more serious. A doctor gave her a bottle of barley liquor containing a white snake. She took this tonic when headaches came. Sometimes she almost dared to tell her son, but words never came.

†Blo bzang. 2019. Smell. *Asian Highlands Perspectives* 58:407-408.

She was proud of her son, and after he graduated from college, she bought him a car using the family's resources, and also held a grand marriage celebration for him.

He turns, grips a new bottle of barley liquor, struggles to open it, and murmurs, "I can feel you."

TIBETAN TERMS

bde skyid sgrol ma བདེ་སྦྱིད་སྒོལ་མ།

blo bzang ལྷོ་བཟང་།

don 'grub rgyal དོན་འགྲུབ་རྒྱལ་།